

# 'Eating, drinking and talking Lenggong'

**ACTIONS AND SOLUTIONS:** Spell out how to protect the core and buffer zones of the archaeological heritage site

**T**ENS of thousands of people flooded Lenggong Valley, situated some 100km north of Ipoh, for the official celebration of its status as a Unesco world heritage site earlier this month.

Until recent times, only a select few were familiar with Lenggong town, let alone the valley.

Besides the locals, the only other group of people who came in close contact with this part of the town since its early days were Professor Datuk Dr Zuraina Majid and her team of researchers, who took 25 painstaking years to get Lenggong Valley inscribed as a world heritage site.

When she first discovered Lenggong Valley back in 1987, little did she know that she was about to excavate a slice of the history of mankind.

But Zuraina, who is currently the heritage commissioner, did just that and Lenggong Valley is now standing tall in the eyes of the world.

Almost overnight, everyone is now "eating Lenggong, drinking Lenggong and talking Lenggong".

With the full-blown celebration rolled out, the question being asked is whether Perak is able to safeguard Lenggong Valley's Unesco world heritage status.

While there had been alarm bells on the potential threats previously, the answer now has got to be a resounding "Yes".

Perak is lucky in the sense that Zuraina had played a pivotal role in getting Lenggong Valley declared as a world heritage site and we can all be sure that if there is anyone who should feel concerned about the archaeological site not being protected, it should be her.

As it is, the "who's who" are already working on a management plan for Lenggong Valley for submission to Unesco by 2014 — a deadline agreed upon by the country — soon after the announcement of the prestigious status on June 30.

The management plan encompasses two major components,



A tour guide showing suevite rocks at the archaeological site at Bukit Bunuh in Lenggong Valley. The authorities should speed up preparation of the management plan.

namely a detailed special area plan and a conservation plan.

The authorities are also discussing the heritage zones for the site.

The major boost has however got to be the RM30 million allocation approved by the cabinet recently to spearhead infrastructure works at Lenggong Valley.

With news that the skeletal remains of Perak Man are set to return to Lenggong Valley, where they were unearthed in 1991, the archaeological site is in for a busy time ahead.

The 11,000-year-old skeletal remains are the only ancient and complete human skeleton that had been exhumed in Malaysia.

Even the people of Lenggong are excited with the future prospects of their hometown.

Villagers have expressed hope for their livelihood to improve in

future with the spillover effects from various activities happening in their backyard.

They are very well aware that Lenggong Valley has all of a sudden become an important focal point, not only for Malaysians, but also from people around the globe.

With everything in place, nothing is going to jeopardise efforts to safeguard Lenggong Valley's Unesco world heritage status.

However, what needs to be done now is for the authorities to speed up the preparation of the management plan since 2014 is, after all, not very far ahead of us.

Also, with the allocation in place, there is no reason to delay infrastructure work at Lenggong Valley. It must begin as promised in January next year.

The authorities must also quickly come out with a guideline on the dos and don'ts in the core and buffer zones. It must be clearly spelt out to everyone.

All these efforts need to be sped up.

The local people should be roped in as they know the ins and outs of

their hometown.

We cannot disappoint, or worse still, turn away our visitors to Lenggong Valley. It is important for us to leave an everlasting impression on them, as they will then help us to spread the good news around.

It has been almost five months since the archaeological heritage of the Lenggong Valley was successfully inscribed as a Unesco world heritage site because of its contribution to the understanding of early man in the world.

It is high time we did justice to this prestigious recognition.

Let us make things right from the word go.

People are no longer interested in only hearing sweet words (read: lip service). What they are more concerned about are actions and solutions.

Politics aside, let us all come together to jointly promote Lenggong to the world, for when the word "Lenggong" is mentioned globally, you and I can wear a big smile and be proud that we are part of this heritage history.

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